

THREE SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE

CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S,
MARITZBURG,

BY

THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

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A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARIENBURG,

On Sunday Evening, May 20, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

ACTS x. 46.—*For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.*

WE were considering this morning what was the real nature of that strange phenomenon, the “speaking with tongues,” which evidently existed in the early Church, and upon which our Church lays so much stress in connexion with the Feast of Whitsunday, which we are this day celebrating. I mentioned that our information upon this subject is derived from three sources—(i) a few words in St. Mark’s Gospel, which contain the promise that, among “the signs that shall follow them that believe,” shall be this, that “they shall speak with new tongues,”—(ii) three passages in the Acts, where instances are given of the exercise of this power of “speaking with tongues,”—(iii) a remarkable portion of St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians, where the apostle distinctly recognises the fact, that many in that Church professed to exercise this spiritual gift in his day. But, as it has been justly remarked (*Dict. of Bible*, III. p. 155):—

It deserves notice that the chronological sequence of these passages, as determined by the date of their composition, is probably just the opposite of that of the periods to which they severally refer.

In other words, this author tells us that St. Paul’s statements were written before the accounts in the Acts, and these again before the passage in the Gospel; and this remark is of importance in enabling us to judge of the com-

parative historical value of these different notices. In fact, that in St. Mark is known by scholars, and is admitted by the present Archbishop of York (*Dict. of Bible*, II.p.259), to be 'probably' no part of the original Gospel, but a late addition "from a different hand," the last twelve verses having been annexed to the Gospel "soon after the apostolic time,"—*how* soon after it is impossible to say. Nor can we fix the age in which the Book of the Acts was compiled, or determine to what extent its narrative has been affected by the thoughts and tendencies of a later age. But in reading St. Paul's words we have firm ground to go upon; and I showed that they enable us to form a pretty clear opinion as to the nature of this practice of "speaking with tongues," which existed in the Church of Corinth in his own time. St. Paul devotes a whole chapter to this subject; and it is very noticeable, as I observed, that this is the only passage in all the epistles of the N.T., in which any distinct reference of any kind is made to it. Nor is it mentioned even by any of the Fathers of the Church till we come to the very end of the second century; and then it is only alluded to in one sentence of Irenæus, as a faculty still exercised by some in his own time,—after which we hear no more of it till the end of another century and a half.

It is plain, therefore, that it was not regarded in those days as a very notable gift in the Church; and certainly, whatever it may have been, it was not that which is very commonly supposed, the power of speaking at will in foreign languages, for the conversion of the heathen,—of telling out in their various tongues, without any previous labour spent in acquiring them, the "wonderful works of God." I need not repeat now the proofs which I gave this morning from the Bible itself that, in point of fact, the apostles themselves never used such a power,—that, when they did not speak in their own proper tongue, the Syriac, they spoke or wrote always in Greek, the common language which prevailed throughout those parts of the Roman Empire, to which their labours appear to have been confined. And, accordingly, Dean Alford states, *Gr. Test.* II.p.11 :—

The idea of a gift of *speaking in various languages* having been conferred for the dissemination of the Gospel, appears not to have originated until the gift of tongues itself had some time disappeared from the Church.

I showed, however, that St. Paul, in that most interesting chapter, 1Cor.xiv, in which he speaks at great length on

this subject, plainly does his best rather to check than to encourage this "speaking with tongues." At most he says, "covet to prophesy,"—that is, desire to be able to preach, to exhort, reprove, convince, edify, your brethren,—*"and forbid not to speak with tongues."* But, throughout, his expressions tend to depreciate this gift, and to discourage the exercise of it,—rather, indeed, to suppress it altogether, unless there was some one at hand to "interpret" in intelligible language the strange, unedifying sounds which were uttered:—

"Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by preaching, or by doctrine? . . . In the Church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brethren, be not children in understanding. In malice indeed—in all kind of wickedness—be ye simple and innocent as children: but in understanding be men."

In short the impression made on anyone, who reads thoughtfully this whole chapter, will be, I think, that St. Paul distrusted altogether this supposed exhibition of spiritual gifts at Corinth. He had heard of the distracted state of that Church,—how parties were formed in it, and some said, "I am of Paul," others, "I am of Appollos," others, "I am of Peter," others, "I am of Christ." He had heard also of the great display which many made by the exercise of these gifts, disturbing the decent order of the Church, and drawing attention to themselves, as more highly distinguished by the possession of these spiritual powers than others. He had heard at the same time of the great irregularities, the looseness of life, the disorderly practices, which prevailed in that Church, so that even at the eucharistic feast they fed themselves greedily without fear, and one was hungry, while another was drunken. And he doubted very much the Divine origin of these (so-called) "gifts": he feared that these ecstatic utterances, these "speakings with tongues," were too often the result of mere excitement and enthusiasm, mixed up, it might be, with self-glorifying vanity. Far away from Corinth at the time, he could not undertake to say that all these appearances were unreal and delusive. But he did what he could to check them; and above all he warned them, in that most beautiful language, which goes at once to the heart of every true Christian, that without charity, that modest, meek, lowly, and loving spirit, which is the only sure evidence of the indwelling presence of the

Holy Spirit, and the growth of Divine Life in the soul, their boasted gifts and graces were as nothing in the sight of God.

And such is the great lesson which we should draw for ourselves from the consideration of the subject brought specially before us by the Church on this day. In every age men have been prone to look for the evidence of the Divine in Man, as in the world at large, in miraculous and astonishing occurrences, passing the bounds of order and the range of ordinary experience. Men have always been looking for the signs of God's nearer Presence in something outward, the "whirlwind," and the "earthquake," and the "fire," instead of in the "still small voice," speaking within the heart. Hence it is that, in the traditions of the Church, we find miracle on miracle heaped on the lives of our Lord and his apostles and the most eminent saints,—down even to our own times in the Roman Church,—and many of these prodigies manifestly invented by some of the most eminent and devout of the Fathers, as Augustine and Jerome,—as if the Divine was most distinctly manifested in the life of Jesus by acts of power and might, instead of by the Majesty of Truth, and Holiness, and Love,—Love, perfected by suffering, triumphant in the midst of human weakness, exhibited in acts of self-sacrifice, not wrought for self-display, but in obedience to the Truth, and to secure the good of others, conquering in death,—as if the work of the Spirit was evidenced more powerfully in the lives of Christians by extraordinary visions and revelations, by inward emotions and sensations, by ecstacy and excitement, than by its quiet silent effect in purifying the heart, restraining the tongue, and rectifying the life. The modern instances of supposed spiritual gifts, to which I referred this morning, as exhibited not long ago in a London congregation, and which we have no difficulty now in ascribing to its true source, a deluded spirit of religious fanaticism, had its forerunner, most probably, in the apostolic age, in the Church of Corinth. And so at the end of the second century we find Tertullian giving in the most serious manner the following account of a raving enthusiast, which might be paralleled with many similar instances in later days.

There is at present a sister among us, who has obtained the gift of revelations, which she receives in the congregation or solemn sanctuary by ecstacy in the Spirit, who has converse with angels, sometimes even with the Lord, and sees and hears sacred truths, and discerns the hearts of some, and ministers remedies

to those who want them. Also, according as the Scriptures are read, or the Psalms sung, or exhortations uttered, or petitions presented, so from these several sources materials are furnished for her visions. We had happened to be discussing something about the soul, when this sister was in the Spirit. After the conclusion of the service, and the dismissal of the congregation, she, after her usual manner of relating her visions—for they are carefully recorded that they may be examined—amongst other remarks said, ‘The soul was shown to me in a bodily form; the spirit appeared, but not of an empty or shapeless quality, but as something which gave hope of being held, tender and bright and of an aerial hue, and altogether of human form.’ Dean Stanley, *Corinthians*, p.262.

Such language as this has been heard repeatedly in the history of the Church. You would find instances of this abundantly in the Journals of John Wesley: for that excellent man, amidst all the good which he undoubtedly was the instrument of doing, has done this evil, to make cries and tears, sighs and groans, disordered vision and diseased imagination, rank with many, as undoubted evidences of true conversion, true turning of the heart to God, true turning of the soul’s eyes to the light of the Sun of Righteousness. And we are told in the public journals that a great Revivalist preacher is on his way to this colony, to call into exercise (we must suppose) excited feelings, which are so easily substituted for that steady growth in grace and in the knowledge and love of God, which are the only true signs of spiritual life. For “the work of the Spirit,” says St. Paul, is—

“Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

He bids us to “be renewed in the spirit of our mind,” and to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” We are to “put away *lying*,” and “speak every man *truth* with his neighbour,”—to “let no corrupt communication proceed out of our mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying,”—to “put away all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil speaking, with all malice,” and “to be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ hath forgiven us.” In this way St. Paul says we shall be “living in the Spirit,” “walking in the Spirit”; we shall not then “grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption.” These are the new voices of the Christian Life, with which our God and Father will be well-pleased; in these utterances He will hear the voice of His own Good Spirit, bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. In this way shall

we glorify our Father's Name, more than if we had power to work miracles, to see ecstatic visions, or dream prophetic dreams, or, like those in the text, to "speak with tongues and magnify God."

You will see, however, that St. Paul lays great stress on the due use of our powers of speech,—even as St. James who tells us that, "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body." Speech is, indeed, one of the chief distinguishing marks of our humanity. A gift we call it, "God's great gift," and such it is, but as an essential part of that very image of God, in which man, God's child on earth, was created. The "Wisdom" of God, we know, is called also His "Word," when we speak of that hidden Wisdom as manifested; and so the mind of man manifests itself—becomes incarnate, as it were—in speech. Hence the sacredness of Truth,—that, first, the thought should correspond with the thing thought of, and in its turn should be duly represented by the words which impart it to others,—in other words, that we should first think aright, and then express rightly what we think.

But, though of Divine origin, speech is, like all things human, imperfect,—imperfect as a medium of thought, still more as a means of communicating feeling. When speech is busied with things invisible, with the Unseen God and man's relation to Him, it can only deal with these great realities by means of their types and shadows in the visible world.

To us Invisible, or dimly seen
In these Thy lower works, yet these declare
Thy Goodness beyond thought, and Power Divine.

What wonder, then, if the words—as, for instance, those of the Creeds—are but, at the most, approximations to the Truth,—if they contract somewhat of the earthly nature of the moulds in which they are made? As such a process takes place, the meaning they impart becomes more narrow, more peculiar to the particular feelings and circumstances of the individual utterer, less an utterance of humanity, less capable of finding its way to the hearts, of modifying the thoughts, of all. But from time to time there has been an outpouring of the Spirit of God through His prophets and apostles in different ages,—I doubt not, through John Wesley among the rest,—enlightening those prophets' eyes, kindling their hearts, fusing, as it were, the material with

which they ministered to their fellowmen—the mere human speech—by intense feeling, so that the message of the Most High was carried, not by miracle commonly so called, but by His own most wonderful yet orderly working, to the hearts, not of one here and one there, but of companies, of masses, of men.

It was so, we must believe, with the Infant Church. When the first disciples had lost the visible presence of their Head, the truths which He had taught them, the great lessons of the Fatherhood of God, and of their Brotherhood with Christ and with each other, became, as it were, irradiated in their minds through the operation of the Spirit of his Father and their Father, so that they saw, as men see truths divinely-revealed, with a flash of overpowering inward conviction. What they had perceived but dimly before, was now overwhelmingly present and real. Their hearts burned within them, radiant with light, beaming with new-awakened life and hope; and they spoke to those without “as the Spirit gave them utterance,” with fulness and fervour, as it were, with tongues of fire. This may have been the real fact upon which as a basis was founded the tradition of a later age, which we find recorded in the second chapter of the Acts, coupled also with the circumstance that in the Church of Corinth such “speaking with tongues” had taken place,—most probably in consequence of some mistaken interpretation of some ancient prophecy, such as that which St. Paul quotes,—

“With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people, and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord.”

However this may be, we cannot doubt that some such a season of reawakened life and joy passed over the infant Church at this time,—whether on this particular day, or not, is of little consequence, any more than it matters whether Christ was really born, or not, on Christmas Day, or whether we keep the true time of the Easter Festival or not, about which, we know, there were very fierce disputes for some centuries in the ancient Church. They had “wept and lamented” for a time, and “the world had rejoiced:” but “their sorrow had been turned into joy.” Such seasons as these, as they pass over mankind, reveal one link and then another of that golden chain, which binds “the whole world about the feet of God.” We know, indeed, at all times that the Father is with us,—that He has not left us

alone in the world to do our work for Him, uncared for, unvisited by tokens of His Love. But, when His Spirit stirs the hearts of His people, so that all "with one mind and one mouth" give Him glory, we feel His Gracious Presence revealed with a power, which is not felt in the secret chamber; for He has made us, human creatures, not single, separate, isolated beings, but having the best part of our patrimony in common, to be enjoyed tenfold when others are manifestly enjoying it.

But, if the Creeds of the Ancient Church are found, more especially in these days of advanced knowledge, to be but imperfect utterances of Divine Truth even for us, who have long been familiar with them, and have had them explained and enforced in the midst of us by elaborate treatises, by catechisings, lectures, and sermons innumerable, how much more must they be for the mind of the unlearned, for the ignorant heathen, the untutored savage! It is true, among the many tongues in which men speak over all the earth, there is hardly one without any word for expressing the great central truth of religion, the Being of God. It is so, we know, in the Zulu tongue, where Unkulunkulu, the Great-Great-One, expresses Him, who was from the beginning, the Creator of all things and all men; and in this language also there are distinct words which recognize the conflict of good and evil within the heart of man, of "the spirit and the flesh," the spiritual and carnal mind, as St. Paul would term them. Here is a far more sufficing proof of the real humanity of what are called inferior races, of their brotherhood with us, of their being taught by one and the selfsame Spirit who is teaching our hearts, than the traditionary notion of their descent from one pair of ancestors at a period far too recent to account for the immense outward difference between the negro and the Hottentot, and the proud son of Western Europe.

But, although there is so far ground for the religious teacher to go on, a means of communicating that which it most imports men to know, of throwing light upon the instinct, still dim and faint, concerning things divine in the untrained heathen mind, there is no possibility of translating, at least to any real purpose, into all heathen languages of the present day, all portions of the Bible,—much less the most elaborate of the creeds of Christendom. Such translations, indeed, are made; but I think most practical mis-

sionaries will agree with me that it is a mistake to attempt to transfer into a heathen tongue all parts of Scripture and all portions of our formularies, before we ourselves have so thoroughly mastered the foreign language by years of continued labour, as not only to speak in it, but to think, as a native, in it. Nay, how even then can this be done to any purpose, when that tongue itself has most probably no words to express a multitude of expressions which are found in our English versions of the Hebrew and Greek originals of the Scriptures, or the Greek and Latin of the Creeds,—and when even the best existing Version of the Bible is in many parts very defective, and, what is obscure and perplexing in the original, has become either altogether unintelligible or absolutely false in the translation. There are, in fact, many portions of the Bible, more especially in the Psalms and Prophecies and Apostolical Epistles, about which the most learned and devout commentators are wholly at variance. There are others, in respect of which the Greek translation, made nearly three centuries before the Christian era, differs entirely from that which is the plain meaning of the present Hebrew, and shows that *their* copy of the Hebrew Text must have often materially differed from ours.

What should we infer from all this?—that the Bible should *not* be translated into English, or, as far as can be, into heathen tongues?—that we should keep the Book shut up from the eyes of the common people, as the Roman Church does?—that we should not let them have the Athanasian Creed, that famous “war-song” of dogmatic Christianity, because there are certain expressions in it, which pass even our comprehension, though turned into our best latinized English, but which are utterly untranslatable into the language of an uncivilized people? Far from it. Much, as you know, has been said about Modern Theologians depreciating the Bible. But the fact is that none are more desirous to propagate it,—none more ready to maintain its wonderful character, to enforce its paramount claims on the attention of mankind,—none more anxious to study it thoroughly and devoutly for themselves, and to commend it to the thoughtful reverence of others,—than the preachers, as they are called, of the Modern School. Only they wish it to be read with intelligent appreciation of its contents, “with the mind as well as with the heart”; they wish that

in this respect, as well as others, the apostle's word should be carried out,—“In malice be ye children; but in understanding be men.” And so, too, with respect to the Creeds, when we know their real history, and have shaken off the superstitious notions which attach to them a quasi-Divine authority, as if they contained the concentrated wisdom of the whole Church in the apostolic or in later times, under the direct sanction of the Holy Ghost, it is most interesting and instructive to hear them read from time to time in our hearing, as the Athanasian Creed has been read this day and will be read next Sunday. They are the grand historical records of great conflicts of thought in former days, the venerable reminiscences of discussions and controversies, which at one time absorbed the attention, and excited the vehement passions, of the whole Christian world,—the summaries of conclusions, which, whether the private work originally of unknown authors, or the result of public discussions in the Imperial Presence, by Bishops gathered from all parts of Christendom, have now been handed down through many centuries, as heirlooms of the Church in all its branches.

From the difficulty, therefore, of translating the Bible and the Church Formularies, and the absolute impossibility of translating at all some portions of them, into many heathen languages, and of translating other parts correctly into *any* tongue, even the English, we do not infer by any means that they are not to be transferred, as far as may be practicable, into all the languages of all the nations, with whom we are brought into contact upon the face of the earth. But we do infer that the hope of any tribe of our race—its hope of Eternal Life—cannot depend upon its having a knowledge of the Bible or the Creeds, in whole or in part,—upon a belief in the absolute infallible accuracy of what can never be imparted to them in a perfect state, as it first was written. We do infer that, when we give to our fellowmen the Bible or the Church Formularies, we are to tell them the truth about them,—to explain that they are but the writings of fallible men, like ourselves,—highly favoured, no doubt, with light from above, when others of the human race were still left lying for a time in darkness, but, after all, falling short of that light which we ourselves have received, who have been called to read a page further on in

God's Great Lesson-Book, who have the results of *their* experience, of *their* revelations of God's Truth, of *their* acquaintance with His works and ways, *increased by our own*.

Some there are, in fact, who, in reading the written word, think almost of the very sounds and syllables as coming directly from the Invisible,—out of the cloud, or out of the clear blue sky,—and regard such utterances as more divine, more authoritative, than if the lips of man had been the organ of the Divine communication,—still more than if that Divine message had been conceived in the human heart or brain, by the ordinary, though mysterious, operation of the Spirit of God. Such thoughts are but a childish way of regarding God's dealings with men, and moreover bring with them this cruel consequence,—the Lord then speaks no more with men, as he did of old! “What hath the Lord spoken?” we say,—and we mean only, “What does the Bible contain?” For how many long centuries, on this view of the subject, has God forsaken His world, and left men to babble what they would concerning Him! Yet in old times when the Prophet said, “Thus saith the Lord!” it was but the expression of his own devout conviction that what was pressing on his spirit, and swelling his heart, was right, was true and good, and that it must therefore be from above. And he was right in that conviction. It is we who are wrong in not confessing that it is the Lord who speaks to us whenever our consciences reply, and our hearts, however reluctantly, smite us. The recognition of a Moral Governor, not absent, not silent, not regardless, because not speaking by marvels and terrors,—which would make our blood stand still in our veins, if we really witnessed them,—which would confuse our intellects and benumb our hearts,—but speaking to our reason, to our moral sense, by the lips of our more highly gifted fellowmen, even by the lips of the simple and childlike whose hearts are pure,—this recognition of a Present God is what we need to make our religion operative. We need not merely a principle—an influence—a Law; we need a *Person*, who governs all,—a Person, I say, for, though the expression is doubtless inadequate to express the mysterious nature of the Divine Being, it is yet the best we can use, the nearest to the Truth,—it brings us nearest to God.

It is a feeling of this want, which arrests the devotions of many at the feet of the saints, the Virgin, nay, even of the Son of Man. They cannot think of the Invisible God as a Person. An invisible spirit seems to them a something vague. A Presence by no space or limits confined seems to them to be nowhere. Yet, if we think, we shall perceive that the flesh divides, it is the spirit which unites. A bodily presence must be limited; the very conditions of it preclude communion beyond very narrow bounds. It would seem as if the Church of Christ could not expand beyond a small number, while Jesus himself was amongst them in the body. It was after his being taken from them that the Spirit was poured out,—

“and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.”

The Spirit of God, inspiring the hearts of His children with faith in Him, with love towards Him, may well be called the Comforter. How do the heavy shadows, which hang about the path of life,—of doubt, of sorrow, of unsatisfied desire,—yield to one ray of that Presence! “God is in the midst of us!” When we feel this to be true, how is the heart quieted, purified, and cheered! In the Church of Christ this Spirit of the Living God is dwelling;—not however, that any earthly temple, not that any community of men, *exclusively* possesses that Spirit, that Living Presence,—but that in fellowship with Christ, in fellowship also with all who have learned of the Father through him, is the highest focus on this earth of that Divine Light and Fire of Love. Our worship will be but a form, our churchmanship a name, a mere party-badge, if we have not the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of love to God, and of love to Man, as the child of God. The simplest creed, irradiated with this, is the very gate of heaven. Without it, the most subtle and most complete, the most elaborate system of Divinity, is but like a vast cathedral, without light or air, cold as the grave, foul as a sepulchre, and haunted by loathsome creatures.

The Spirit of God is called by Christ himself the Comforter. St. Paul describes the selfsame spirit as one “not of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind.” And such a spirit is specially needed at the present day. The felt Presence of the Living God amongst us will deliver us from

the terrors which assail those, who think that their whole religious system, their house of faith, and fortress of their souls, is in danger of falling at once to the ground, if one line or letter of the Bible should prove to be less than infallible. It will give us power to do the work which He has given us to do; it will preserve us firm and unmoved amidst the madness of men, in the sure confidence that in God's due time the truth will assuredly be made plain and triumph, to the comfort, enlightenment, and support of His children.

In another place St. Paul says "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty": there the law of love is not felt as bondage—it is a living principle. To him who has the Spirit of Christ, the filial Spirit of trust in the Living God, the yoke of Christ's religion is easy and his burden light. This liberty is the very opposite of licentiousness: it is a "delight in the Law of God after the inner man," whereas "he, who commits sin, is the slave of sin." The epistles of St. Paul are full everywhere of exhortations to his converts to assert this their Christian liberty, in opposition specially to the yoke of ritual ordinances which the Jewish Law imposed. Attempts are now being made to fasten upon our necks a different bondage—different in form, but kindred in spirit. The authority of Church Councils and Church Doctors is invoked to forbid our searching the Scriptures honestly and thoroughly,—or at least to forbid our imparting to others what we find there,—to forbid our searching too deeply into both the Works and the Word of our Father in Heaven. But why is the Promise, which, as St. Peter said, was for "ourselves and our children," to be confined to the first centuries of the Church, to be understood as not reaching to us? Why are the dicta of certain ancient Bishops,—ancient, but far removed from the times of the apostles, and from the teaching of Christ himself,—to be regarded as more binding on us than the conclusions of the really learned and laborious students of God's Truth in the present day, with all the lights, the helps and appliances, of advancing knowledge?

Let us, who live in the eldest age of the world, keep still the docile spirit towards Divine teaching, which belongs to mature years. It is youth which is apt to be self-confident: and so the youth, the early age, of Christianity, was very

positive and self-asserting, ready to lay down its own defective notions as eternal, infallible, truths, which were to bind all future ages. Advancing years, and the experience of many mistakes, teach men to suspend the judgment, to be willing to receive light from all sources, to listen to teaching from any quarter, to recognize the grand principle, that—

“ every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.”

But it must be light, not darkness,—teaching, not dictation,—reason, which satisfies our own minds, not the mere assertions and dogmas of others;—for it is this alone, that will come with living power to us as the Word of God, will be felt by us as the Word of Truth, “ which liveth and abideth for ever.”

[No. 22.—Second Series.]

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Morning, May 27, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

ST. JOHN I. 18.—*No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

“No man hath seen God at any time.” From the world of which our senses tell us, with its overwhelming vastness, its mighty forces, its unity in variety, its beautiful order and harmony, we might have guessed the grand truth of there being one Creative Intelligence, One Lawgiver for so many various and complicated, yet wonderfully harmonizing, laws. And our fellowmen, we know, have done this,—men who were not gladdened with the light of Christianity, but who yet had within them the Light of that Divine Word, which “lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.” Thus Cicero has said, using long ago the famous argument of Archdeacon Paley, *De Nat. Deor.* II. 38:—

Whoever thinks that the wonderful order and incredible constancy of the heavenly bodies and their motions is not governed by an intelligent Being, is himself void of understanding. For shall we, when we see an artificial machine, a sphere or a dial, acknowledge at first sight that it is the work of art and understanding, and make any doubt that the heavens are the work, not only of reason, but of an excellent and Divine reason?

And a step further has led men to adoration of that Great Being, who sits upon the throne of the Universe,—to say from the bottom of their hearts, with the elders of whom we heard this morning,—

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created.”

Thus Athenagoras, an Athenian Philosopher, at first an opponent of Christian teaching, but afterwards a convert, has written as follows, in his *Apology for Christianity*, addressed to the Roman Emperors under whom he lived:—

The world indeed is beautiful. . . . But we ought not to worship this, but its Maker. . . . You princes, indeed, build your palaces for your own use. But God created the world, not for His own use, as wanting nothing; for God is everything to Himself, light inaccessible, a perfect world, spirit, power, and reason. If, then, the world is a perfect instrument, moving in harmony, I worship Him who tuned it, and strikes the notes, and is the prime cause of its music and harmony, not the instrument.

But, although from these things we may learn, as St. Paul says, “that which is knowable” about our Great Creator—His Power, His Wisdom,—nay, more, His Kindliness to Man, and to all the creatures of His Hand,—

“for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His Eternal Power and Godhead,”—

yet we cannot know *Him* from thence; we cannot see that which our souls long for, that which sheds the golden sunlight on our path, the Goodness, the Holiness, the Love, of God. All that the light of Science shows us,—wonderful as the revelation is, surpassing all thought,—and a thousand-fold more than was known to our fathers, or to the prophets and apostles of old,—all that the wisest of us can discover,—leaves us still but children at the feet of Infinite Wisdom.

The highest-mounted mind, he said,
Still sees the sacred morning spread
The silent summit overhead.

With all our advanced knowledge of God's works, we must still say with Job of old—

“Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him? And the thunder of His Power who can understand?”

But the excellent beauties of His Holiness, the perfections of His Moral Character, cannot be learned at all in this way. With the mere outward vision, with the eye fixed upon the world of sensible objects, “no man has seen God at any time,”—has had a glimpse of His essential glory. No miracles or mighty works can teach us these things,—no exhibitions of astonishing wisdom or stupendous power. Only in the silent inner Sanctuary of the soul can we see God,—by the light which the Holy Spirit sheds upon the heart that is pure, and lowly, and loving. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” says our

Lord himself in his Sermon on the Mount. And St John says—

“We know that, when he shall appear, [rather, when it (our future glory) shall be manifested,] we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyman that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”

And, though the Apostle in this place is speaking of that perfect vision of God, which glorified spirits shall enjoy in the world beyond the grave, yet even here, as St. Paul says, we see our Father's Face, but as though “through a glass darkly,” that is, as we see an image dimly reflected in a mirror; “but then” we shall see Him “face to face”:—

“Now we know in part; but then shall we know even as we are known.”

And he says elsewhere—

“We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, [or, rather, as in a mirror,] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.”

St. Paul refers here to the well-known story in the Book of Exodus, how Moses put a vail over his face when he came from his awful communings with God, bright with the glory which had streamed upon him from the Heavenly Presence, so bright that they could not bear to look upon it. He threw a vail, therefore, over his face while he spake to them; there was a vail between their eyes and the glory of God. But we, he says, we, Christians, with open face—with no vail between—behold the glory of the Lord,—not directly, indeed, but reflected, as in a mirror, from the life and teaching of Christ, as it was of old from the face of Moses.

“No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him.”

God's ancient people, Israel, taught, though they were, by men divinely inspired, to look to the Creator of all the earth, as their Lawgiver and King, for protection, for guidance, had but very low and limited notions of His true nature, of His essential glory. They might be said, like Moses, while hidden in the hollow of His Hand, to behold the back parts of their God, while His Glory passed by. But this very conception of such an interview of the Divine Majesty, of Him who—

“dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see,”—

with his feeble creature, who had said, “I beseech thee, show me Thy glory,”—resembles other notions of pious

men in those early times, who supposed that He appeared in human form, and walked, and talked, and argued, and even ate and drank, with mortal men,—as when, for instance, we read—

“Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and, as it were, the body of heaven in its clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand; also they saw God, and did eat and drink.”

All these are indications of the exceeding rudeness of their ideas respecting Him,—signs that they still beheld Him through the veil of ignorance and superstition, though not so dense as that of the nations round them. It was the childhood of the world, the childhood of the Church,—I mean the Church in its largest widest sense, the human race in its religious aspect. They believed and trusted in Jehovah, the Living God; they loved and feared Him; but they knew him only as one may see the boundless sky through a narrow slit in the house-roof. Such, at least, were the glimpses of the Divine Glory, which were caught by the masses of the common people, while the great prophets of Israel, like Moses of old in the story, brought message after message of Truth to their ears, and tried to pour upon their eyes the light of that clearer knowledge of God, which had been vouchsafed to their own hearts. But—

“their eyes were darkened that they could not see, and their ears heavy that they could not hear.”

And even the Prophets, as we have seen in some measure, in many of their conceptions fell short of what we now know to be due to the Majesty of Him “with whom we have to do.” To us, people of the 19th century, with its vast and widening research into nature, such conceptions of the God of all the earth,—say, rather, of the Author of all the worlds,—would be impossible. But before the time came, in the Wisdom of God, for this revelation of Himself in nature, humanity had been prepared—above all, by the teaching of Christ—to think of God as a Spirit, “whom no man hath seen nor can see,” or, as our text puts it, “whom no man hath seen at any time.”

Yet, although the apprehensions of those of old were so limited, as far as the Power, the Wisdom and Greatness, of the Creator was concerned, they had more light in regard to His moral character, and their relations to Him as a Moral Governor,—a light which “the heavens declaring the glory

of God, and the firmament showing His handywork," could never have given them. His Word was heard continually in the hearts of His saints and prophets, moving them to put their trust in Him, to fear and to obey Him,—saying to one, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward,"—to another,—

"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Living God, thy God, is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

For, though these narratives may not be real histories, though words such as these may never have been spoken by the actual voice of the Almighty audibly in the ears of Abraham and Joshua,—though we may have here only the conceptions of pious writers, filling up from their own imaginations the outlines of the early annals of their race,—yet still in the hearts of these very writers there must have been a Divine Life beating, there must have been a holy trust and fear and love, the result of close communion with God, the fruit of many teachings by His Spirit,—which enabled them to conceive such words, as the expressions of their own deep thoughts, and to utter them forth, as prophets of God, in the ears of their fellow-men. His Word revealed to them His Nature in such measure as they were able to bear it. To them He was—

"the LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and unto the fourth generation."

Yet this revelation was preparatory only: it had a national character, confining the special mercies of God exclusively to the Jews, or to those who were in covenant with them, to those, as the prophet says, "out of all languages of the nations," who should—

"take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you."

Jehovah was to them first the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," then the "King of Jacob," the "Holy One of Israel." The full light of his teaching, who bade every child of man look up to heaven, and say "Our Father," was yet to come. God's servants of old were not deceived in believing that they felt His Presence with them, in believing that they heard His Voice in their hearts. The outward accidents of the vision belonged to their own ignorance, or

were suggested by their superstition: the substantial truth was not affected by these. Our sense of God's Presence, our awful joy at His Word, ought not to be less deep and real because it is divested, by our greater culture, of this outward and sensible character. That knowledge of our relation to Him, which Christ has revealed to us, ought to lift us out of the vagueness of Pantheism, while it delivers us from the gross superstitions of the younger world.

Our Lord is represented as saying on one occasion to Philip, who had asked him to show them the Father,—

“Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He, who hath seen me, hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?”

And again we read—

“Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me. And he, that seeth me, seeth Him that sent me.”

Yet our text says, written by the very same hand which ascribes these utterances to Christ,—“No man hath seen God at any time.” Surely meditation upon these words will show us that the vision of Christ's bodily form, however worthy of love and reverence, is not that manifestation of God which we are to look for. He has revealed God by his teaching,—by his own life of filial faith,—by his death in which he witnessed for the truths which he taught,—and not only thus, for others also in different ages have taught the truth and have sealed it with their blood,—but by that holy fellowship in which he bound all his disciples to himself, as the Brother of all and the dear Son of God, that they might also be bound to one another through him, as brethren of one another and children of God,—“heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ,”—“sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.”

This *must* be the true calling and destiny of human beings; because for centuries this faith has been the fostering nurse of all that is most sacred and most true,—because this faith it is which overcomes the world, and the gates of hell, although embattled high, and garrisoned by all the powers of selfishness and hate, have not prevailed, nor ever shall prevail, against it,—because amidst all the corruptions, the hideous distortions, to which it has been subject through so many ages, it rises again and again, and shakes them off, and allies itself with all that is highest and purest in our nature, with the highest and purest natures amongst men.

The faith of Christ,—the faith, which cares for the weak, which reclaims the fallen, which makes us see in every human creature our Father's child, which teaches us that we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, which sets before us the cross, the sacred emblem of love and suffering, as the glory of humanity,—how can the Author of that faith, of this pure doctrine, be any other than the Lord and Saviour of men, the dear Son of Man and Son of God, in whom “the Father was dwelling” by the Eternal Word, to whom He “gave not the Spirit by measure”? Yes! Christianity is a fact—a fact of the present as well as of the past. No criticism of documents, no discovery of glosses, no sifting of history, can ever disprove it, or rob it of any of its essential glories, as the Light—the Great Light—which has “come down from above, from the Father of Lights,” to lighten our race. It has shown us the Face of Our Father, the Father and Gracious Friend of us all. And, in the brightness of that countenance, we read the meaning of our earthly life, and the promise of a better life hereafter.

Nothing is more plain in the New Testament than that the sum and substance of it, as of the Old, is not a system of religious worship, not a summary of many and various things to be believed or done,—so that “whosoever shall not believe or do them, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly,”—but a revelation of God and of our relation to Him, as that of children to a loving Father. Philip's appeal, though doubtless, we may believe, made in much ignorance, was indeed full of meaning and true feeling,—“Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” He expressed the longing desire of his own heart and of ours, and the answer comes to us, as to him,—

“He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father”—“This is Eternal Life, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”

We know the Father, if we believe with the heart in Jesus Christ as the Son of God,—if we see in all the gracious utterances of his life the manifestations of the Father's Glory, of His Goodness, Truth, and Love. Mere works of Power, as I have said,—miracles of Might and Wisdom,—would not have revealed the Father to us,—certainly not to Philip and his fellow-disciples, who all believed that Moses and Elijah had wrought greater wonders even than those, which are ascribed in the Gospels to the Christ himself, and

who knew that a prophet's voice had warned them of old, that "signs and wonders" might deceive,—that a false prophet might rise among them, and might "give them a sign or a wonder," and "if the sign or the wonder came to pass," by which he sought to lead them astray from the right path, they were not to hearken to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams:—

"for the LORD your God proveth you to know whether ye love the LORD your God, with all your heart and with all your soul."

But when they realized that all the daily life of Jesus, his life of truth and purity and love, was the welling-forth of the Divine Life within him, that he was speaking his Father's words, and doing his Father's works, that he was "dwelling in the Father and the Father in him," then indeed their faith and hope in God were set upon a rock which could not be moved. The Invisible God, dwelling in Light unapproachable, had manifested Himself to man; they saw that the Word of Life which Christ spake, was "not his, but the Father's which sent him"; they felt that his filial joy and confidence might also be theirs; they understood in some measure the meaning of those words—

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

I say, they understood the meaning of these words in some measure; for they did not yet fully realize it, in all its depth and fulness. The "peace of Christ," in the settled conviction of God's Fatherly Love to him and to his brethren,—this is that "peace which passeth all understanding," which he has left as our portion. It is this fact, of his asserting a claim of sonship to God, for himself and for each one of us his brethren, which differences his work from that of other religious teachers. On the practical realization by us of this intimate relation, this union between God and Man, he laid the chief stress, as the very sign of his Divine Mission, when he prayed in his last prayer,—

"that they all may be one, as *Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee*, that they also may be *one in us*, that the world may believe that *Thou hast sent me*,"—"that they may be one, even as we are one, *I in them, and Thou in me*, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that *Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me*."

On this was founded that Universal Fellowship, which we call the Catholic and Apostolic Church. It was this which made his sufferings a source of strength and consolation to us, the price of our peace, the balm of our souls. He, the

Beloved, God's meek, obedient, pure, and loving Son, was rejected of men, was crucified, was seemingly forsaken, abandoned, both of heaven and earth: and yet he was victorious, and, though dying in the eyes of men, he liveth eternally to God. Then suffering is no mark of Divine displeasure; it is a trial of faith, a discipline of perfection. We, too, each in our measure, must—

“ fill up that which is left behind of Christ's afflictions for his body's sake, that is, the Church.”

We too must be willing to lay aside all thought of selfish ease, self-indulgence, self-seeking. We must be ready, if need be, to suffer, as sons of God, for our own good and the good of our brethren. In this we shall have fellowship with Christ, and with all the elect—God's chosen servants—God's anointed ones—in all ages.

It is well to remember also that the Son of Man has taught us thus to realize the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of men, as children of God, not by dogmas and definitions, but by simply assuming it as the basis of all he did and said, as the principle of his own holy, self-sacrificing life. He illustrated it again and again in various ways,—teaching the care and providence of Him, who numbers the very hairs of our heads,—who smiles upon the children and the childlike spirits,—whose compassions fail not even for those, who are yet a great way off in self-chosen degradation and misery. How do all these teachings of Jesus give and receive light from that one central doctrine concerning the Father! And the truth of that other correlative doctrine, the Brotherhood of men as children of God, is in like manner set forth in his teaching in a number of parables, as well as by direct lessons, as when he spake the story of the good Samaritan, or charged his disciples—

“ Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.”

It is noticeable that the expression “ *only-begotten son*,” which occurs in the text, is used only by the writer of this Gospel, whoever he may have been. For, as I have told you already, it is very doubtful if this writer was the apostle St. John, and indeed it is tolerably certain that the Gospel was not written till after John's death. Thus, for instance, it does not appear to have been quoted, nor therefore to have

been known, by the Fathers of the Church, till after the middle of the second century,—which can hardly be accounted for, if it was really the work of St. John. Four times is the expression used in this Gospel, and once in the first epistle of St. John, which is certainly due to the same author. It is used probably in the sense of “*belored, darling, son,*” as in Mt.iii.17, Mk.i.11, L.ix.35,—in which sense the Hebrew phrase, which means strictly “*only, only-begotten, son,*” is almost invariably explained by the Greek translators, *e.g.* G.xxii.2, 12, 16, Pr.iv.3, Jer.vi.26, Am.viii.10, Zec.xii.10; while, on the other hand, where the E.V. has,—

“Deliver my soul from the sword, *my darling* from the power of the dog,” Ps.xxii.20—

“Rescue my soul from their destructions, *my darling* from the lions,” Ps.xxxv.17—

the LXX translate literally in each case “*my only-begotten.*”

The expression, “*who is in the bosom of the Father,*” seems to imply that complacent repose in the embrace of God, that utter and neverfailing confidence and rest in the Love of God, that intimate communion and fellowship with God, which characterized our Lord in life and in death. “The Father,” he said, “hath not left me alone: for I do always those things that please Him;” and so we remember how he said, in his hour of bitter agony, “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt!” Such must needs be the state of one who should reveal the Father to men. And in our measure, let us remember, this will be our state also, as brethren of Christ and children of God, so far as we are pure in heart, and true in life, and meek and lowly and loving, as he was,—so far as we are faithful Christians,—so far as we are “followers of God as dear children,”—so far as we walk in the light, as He is in the light,—for then “truly,” as the Scripture says—

“Our fellowship will be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

But sin, we know, raises dark clouds between the soul and the face of God. Sin brings fear of wrath, the natural shrinking from pain and punishment, which we feel we deserve. And sin persisted in,—still more, a life of selfishness, of carelessness and disobedience,—will make it impossible to think of God, with peace and joy, as a loving Father. How should there be any sympathy between Him, whose Name is Love, and the hard worldling, who lives merely for himself, for pleasure or for gain,—who does not

care for the souls of his fellowmen, nor yet for their bodies,—who never denies himself, or exposes himself to suffering or loss, for the sake of any child of man?

But in the life of Christ, slight as is the sketch which we have of it in the Gospels, the leading idea is of one who lived wholly for others, to comfort and to heal, above all to bring home to God the lost sheep of the flock, to waken penitence in the sinner, and to assure the penitent of pardon and peace. And, if the history in the Gospels of the life of our Head is but a sketch, it is in a measure filled up by the lives of the members of the body of Christ—of all his true followers—in every age. Whom do we and all men recognize as true *Christians*, even though with many weaknesses, perhaps, and imperfections? Are not labours of love, sufferings for love's sake, the *essential* parts of the characters of such? A Christian may be ignorant, feeble,—perhaps, imprudent; he may know nothing of the Athanasian Creed, or, knowing it, he may dislike some parts of it, and doubt or dispute others; and yet he may receive that blessing which the Master pronounced upon the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemaker. But a cruel Christian! a selfish Christian! an avaricious Christian! a vindictive Christian! an impure Christian! even a self-indulgent Christian!—is a contradiction in terms.

From this universal feeling, as to what is most of all imperative upon those who would be reckoned followers of Christ, and as such would come to the Holy Table, we learn what is the chief feature in the Divine Character, which Christ exhibited,—what God is, according to Christ. But, if we look a little closer, we shall see as plainly that this love and care for others, which is required of Christians, which was so manifest in Christ himself, is not a mere kind unwillingness to give pain, a sensitive shrinking from the voice of complaint. It is an earnest seeking their true welfare, their welfare as spiritual beings, the health and wellbeing of their moral nature. Our Heavenly Father, then, who beholds the returning prodigal afar off, and runs with tender love to meet him, though He welcomes the sinner home with outstretched arms, cannot and will not stifle the penitent thoughts, which fill his bosom. His Will is our Sanctification—that we should be made holy and loving like Himself, as true men should be. And how much needful discipline may not that involve for each of us?

A SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF ST. PETER'S, MARITZBURG,

On Sunday Evening, May 27, 1866,

BY THE

RIGHT REVEREND THE LORD BISHOP OF NATAL.

1 JOHN v. 20, 21.—*And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is True, and we are in Him that is True, even in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the True God and Eternal Life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.*

THIS morning we had read again in our hearing, by the order of our Church, the Athanasian Creed, which was read last Sunday. And I doubt not its words awoke in some of you who heard it those painful feelings, which the reading of this Creed never fails to arouse in very many excellent Christians, of thoughtful minds and charitable hearts, not because they themselves disbelieve the doctrines it enunciates, but because they cannot bear to join in passing such terrible judgment upon others, who from defects of education or a different training, from the influence of the opinions of those whom they are bound to reverence, or it may be from their own deep convictions, the results of many hours of anxious thought and doubt, which have never troubled the peace, or even the unthinking unconcern and lazy indifference, of others, have been led to question, if not to reject, some parts of the Creed.

Which Faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

This is the Catholic Faith which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

These are sentences which many a loving spirit shrinks from uttering against many whose creeds he believes to be less

orthodox than his own, but whose life he may know to be as pure as—perhaps more pure and faithful than—his own, in whose daily conduct he may see the plainest traces of that Divine Charity, which—

“beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things”—which is the true characteristic of the child of God, and will endure for ever, when *faith*, such as “can remove mountains,” and *hope*, though built on the most perfect form of words, shall be done away,—in whom he can discern the signs of that spirit, upon which a blessing was once pronounced, without any regard to orthodoxy of Creed, or anathema of Council or Church,—

“Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy! Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God!”

And, indeed, you probably know that Archbishop Tillotson expressed a wish that we were well rid of the Athanasian Creed. And, in point of fact, in the year 1689, it was agreed unanimously by a Royal Commission, appointed to revise and correct our Liturgy, to make an important addition to the Rubric as it now stands before the Athanasian Creed, which would have materially softened the harshness of the so-called damnatory clauses. The Commission consisted of ten Bishops and twenty other Divines, among whom you will remember the eminent names of Burnet, Stillingfleet, Patrick, Tillotson, Beveridge, and Tennison. Dr. Waterland, the great authority upon the Athanasian Creed, writes as follows on this point, iii.250:—

There are two accounts which I have seen of this matter. Dr. Nichols's account runs thus: ‘Athanasius’ Creed being disliked by many, because of the *damnatory* clauses, it was left to the *minister's* choice, either to use it or to change it for the Apostles’ Creed.’ Dr. Calamy's account is this: ‘About the Athanasian Creed they came at last to this conclusion, that, lest the wholly rejecting it should by unreasonable persons be imputed to them as Socinianism, a Rubrick shall be made, setting forth or declaring the *curses* denounced therein not to be restrained to every particular article, but intended against those who deny the substance of the Christian Religion in general.’ Now from these two accounts compared it may be reasonable to believe that those wise and good prelates had once drawn up a scheme to be debated and canvassed, in which scheme it was proposed to leave every minister at liberty with respect to the Athanasian Creed: but upon more mature consideration they came at last to this conclusion, to impose the Creed as before, and to qualify the seeming harshness of the damnatory clauses by a softening Rubrick.

This proposal, however, was never passed into law, and the report of the Commission has never been published, and the record of it has either been mislaid or lost, except an extract procured by Dr. Waterland, in the year 1727, of

the addition agreed to be made to the Rubric which now stands before the Athanasian Creed, which was as follows :—

The articles of which ought to be received and believed as being agreeable to the holy Scripture. And the condemning clauses are to be understood as relating only to those who obstinately deny the substance of the Christian Faith.

This would have left it altogether undecided what is “the substance” of the Christian Faith, the not holding which would incur the penalty of eternal damnation; and every man would have had to settle this point for himself between God and his own conscience. But it is clear that those excellent Divines did not think it necessary, as some do at this day, to enforce under this awful sanction belief in each article of this Creed, and were even deliberately considering a proposition not to impose the reading of it on the minister at all. It is plain they did not deem its abstruse definitions of such vital consequence, that each one of them must be “faithfully believed” or a man “cannot be saved,”—that the entire Creed must be “kept whole and undefiled,” or “without doubt he shall perish everlastingly,”—unless, indeed, they explained these expressions by saying, that a man could not “keep” what he had never received,—received with the *head* and *heart*, as well as merely with the ears,—and that, whatever a man has so approved with his reasoning powers, and assented to with his inner being as true, *that* he is bound to ‘believe faithfully,’ to ‘keep whole and undefiled,’ under pain of God’s severe displeasure. And so, in fact, Dr. Waterland writes, iii.244 :—

This is to be understood, like all other general propositions, with proper reserves, and qualifying construction. As for instance, if after laying down a system of Christian morality, it be said, *This is the Christian practice, which except a man faithfully observe and follow, he cannot be saved*, it would be no more than right and just thus to say, that no one could be supposed hereby to exclude any such merciful abatements or allowances, as shall be made for men’s particular *circumstances, weaknesses, frailties, ignorance, inability, or the like*, or for their *sincere intention*, and *honest desire*, of knowing and doing the whole Will of God, &c.

As it is, however, the laws of our Church require that this Creed shall be read on certain occasions, as on this Sunday and the last; and, as I then observed, it is good for us that we should hear from time to time the language in which the men of other days have formulated their beliefs, if only we regard them from a rational point of view as human compositions, at least as much liable to error as the text of the Scripture itself on which they are based, and shake off the superstitious notion with which they are viewed

by some, as being of absolute, infallible, almost Divine authority, just as if they had dropped down upon us from the sky. This is in exact accordance with the words of an eminent Divine, who has been quoted by the present Archbishop of Canterbury, as a great defender of the traditionary views on some points, in opposition to arguments advanced by myself,—I mean Bishop Watson, who was also Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge for more than a quarter of a century. He writes as follows :—

I certainly dislike the *imposition* of all Creeds formed by human authority ; though I do not dislike them as useful summaries of what *their compilers believed* to be true.... The Greek Church admits not into its ritual either the Apostles' Creed or the Athanasian, but only the Nicene. The Episcopal Church in America admits the Nicene and the Apostles' Creed, but rejects the Athanasian. The Church of England admits the three into its Liturgy ; and some of the foreign Protestant Churches admit none but the Apostles'. These, and other Creeds which might be mentioned, are all of human fabrication. What are the Catechisms of the Romish Church, of the English Church, of the Scotch Church, and of all other Churches, but a set of propositions, which men of different natural capacities, education, prejudices, have fabricated, (sometimes on the anvil of sincerity, oftener on that of ignorance, interest, or hypocrisy,) from the Divine materials furnished by the Bible ? And can any man of an enlarged charity believe that his salvation will ultimately depend on a concurrence in opinion with any of these niceties, which the several sects of Christians have assumed, as essentially necessary for a Christian man's belief ? Oh no ! Christianity is not a speculative business. One good act, performed from a principle of obedience to the declared Will of God, will be of more service to every individual Christian than all the speculative theology of Augustine.

But, in order that we may estimate the different Creeds at their true value, it is necessary that we should know something about the history of their composition. And I think this a suitable occasion for setting before you a few facts with reference to the origin of the three Creeds, which our Church has embodied in her Services,—the *Apostles' Creed*, the *Nicene*, and the *Athanasian*.

(i) I take, first, the Apostles' Creed, as being the shortest and simplest, and to all appearance the most primitive. Indeed, I suppose, there are very many even in this day who suppose that it is so old, as to have almost Apostolical authority, as having been—if not actually composed and used by the Apostles—yet drawn in a very early age from the substance of their teaching, and introduced in their time, or very soon after it, into all the Churches of Christendom. And, indeed, for this opinion no less an authority may be quoted than that of Bishop Jeremy Taylor, who writes on this point as follows (*Liberty of Prophesying*, i.78) :—

The Apostles, or the holy men their contemporaries and disciples, composed a Creed to be a rule of faith to all Christians, which Creed unless it had con-

tained all the entire object of faith and the foundation of religion, it cannot be imagined to what purpose it should serve. . . . But, if this was sufficient to bring men to heaven then, why not now? If the Apostles admitted all to their communion that believed this Creed, why shall we exclude any that preserve the same entire? Why is not our faith of these articles of as much efficacy for bringing us to heaven as it was in the churches apostolical, who had guides more infallible, that might without error have taught them superstructures enough if they had been necessary? And so they did. But that they did not insert them into the Creed, when they might have done it with as much certainty as these articles, makes it clear to my understanding that other things were not necessary, but these were,—that, whatever profit and advantages might come from other articles, yet these were sufficient, and, however certain persons might accidentally be obliged to believe much more, yet this was the one and only foundation of faith, upon which all persons were to build their hopes of heaven; this was therefore necessary to be taught to all, because of necessity to be believed by all.

And in another place he quotes the words of Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome, to this effect:—

‘ This short and perfect confession of the Catholic Creed, which was consigned to the sentences of the Twelve Apostles, is so perfect a celestial armour, that all the opinions of heretics may by this alone, as with a sword, be cut in pieces.’

And, as might have been expected, in due time tradition ascribed to each of the Twelve Apostles a separate portion of the Creed, St. Paul, however, being left out; thus—

St. Peter contributed, “ I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth,”—

St. Andrew, “ And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord,”—

St. James, “ Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,”—

St. John, “ He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried,”—&c., &c.

It need hardly be said that there is not a shadow of foundation for this artificial theory; nor is there any for the view more commonly held at the present day, and entertained, as we have seen, even by Bishop Jeremy Taylor. On this point I quote again the words of Dr. Waterland, one of the highest authorities on such questions:—

Dr. Taylor goes upon a *false* supposition that the Creed called the Apostles’ was compiled by the Apostles. He has another *false* presumption, appearing all the way in his reasonings on this head, that the Apostles’ Creed has been always the *same* that it is now; whereas learned men know that it was not brought to its present entire form till after the year 600. I know not whether the words, *Maker of heaven and earth*, can be proved by any *certain* authority, to have come into that Creed before the *eighth* Century. It is nothing else but the baptismal Creed of one particular Church, the Church of Rome, and designedly short for the ease of those who were to repeat it at baptism. Now, when we are told of the Apostles’ Creed containing *all that is necessary to salvation*, and *no more than is necessary*, we would gladly know whether it be meant of the *old short Roman Creed*, or of the *present one*, considerably larger; and, if they intend the *old one*, why application is not made to our governors to lay the *new one* aside, or to curtail and reduce it to its primitive size, by leaving out the belief or profession of God’s being *Creator of heaven and earth*, and of Christ’s being *dead*, and of his *descent into hell*, and of the Church

being *catholic*, and of the *communion of the saints*, and of *life everlasting*, as unnecessary articles of faith? For why may not that suffice *now*, which was *once* sufficient? Or how can any thing be *necessary* at this day, that was not so from the beginning? iii.252.

You may like to hear the original form of this Creed:—

'I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried, rose again the third day from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of the Father, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and dead, and in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Church, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the body. Amen.'

Again, Dr. Waterland says in another place, iv.19:—

The Creed, called the Apostles' or Apostolical, has had a particular respect paid to it, because, by a *vulgar error*, derived from the fifth century, it had been conceived to have owed its birth to the Apostles themselves; though it is really nothing else but the Creed of the Roman Church, and called Apostolical, because the Roman see has had the name of Apostolical. Our Reformers, who compiled our offices, were scarce yet free from the prejudices of the vulgar error that had long obtained, though Valla and Erasmus had before smelt it out. Later eritics have demonstrated the fabulosity of this tradition. Had our Reformers been wise enough at that time to see it, it may be doubted whether they would have paid so much respect to this Creed; so that it is wrong to commend their *wisdom* in it, when it might be more owing to their *simplicity*, and to the then infant state of *criticism*.

Once more the same author writes, ii.191:—

It is well-known to learned men that the Creed, called the Apostles', is no other than the *Roman Creed*. 'It has obtained the name of the Apostolic Creed,' as a learned and accurate author observes, 'for no greater or other reason than this. It was a custom to call those churches in which any *Apostle* had personally taught, especially if he had resided there any long time, or had died there, *Apostolic Churches*. Of these there were a great many in the Eastern parts—Jerusalem, Corinth, Ephesus, Antioch, &c.—but in the Western parts none but Rome. So that anyone, that in the Western parts of the world spoke of the *Apostolic Church*, was supposed to mean *Rome*; and so their Bishop came to be called the *Apostolic Bishop*, their See, the *Apostolic See*, their Faith, the *Apostolic Faith*, and, among the rest, the Creed that they used, the *Apostolic Creed*, now called 'the Apostles'.' The Creed, then, of the Apostles (as it is particularly called, though other Creeds might as justly have, and really have had, the name of the Apostles' Creed) is certainly no other than the Creed of one particular Church, the Church of Rome, and is neither so old (taken all together), nor of so great authority, as the *Nicene Creed* itself. . . . There is no reason to lay any more stress upon it than upon the Creeds of Irenæus, Tertullian, or Origen, or the Creed of Jerusalem, &c., all of them, probably, as old or older than the Roman.

Thus you see that there is no real ground at all for the tradition, which, as this author observes, iii.119, was—

prevailing and universal in the Latin Church, down from the fifth century at least, that the Apostolical Creed was composed by the Twelve Apostles, and therefore was as *sacred*, and of as great authority, as the inspired writings.

Nor was it generally received in the Ancient Church, as most suppose; for the same writer tells us, iii.196—

The Apostles' Creed hath not been admitted, scarcely known, in Africa, and but little in Asia, except among the Armenians, who are said to receive it.

Nor do we possess it now in its original form, since additions were made to it, as you have heard, up to the end of the sixth or perhaps even the eighth century, so that as Dr. Waterland says again, iii.197—

While the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds have been growing up to their present perfection in a course of years or centuries of years, and not completed till the year 600, this Creed (the Athanasian) was made and perfected, at once, and is more ancient, if considered as an *entire form*, than either of the other.

Indeed he adds, iii.p.526 :—

I may observe that the *shorter* form of the Roman Creed, (called the Apostles'), seems to carry some marks of its having been formerly shorter, by its bringing in the article of the Holy Ghost in this abrupt manner, 'and in the Holy Ghost,'—words which came in very aptly in the *primitive* form, [supposed to have been merely 'I believe in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,'] when they immediately followed 'and in the Son,' but which would appear abrupt, after several new insertions made between the two articles. Wherefore, to salve that appearing abruptness, the Church afterwards striking out *and*, inserted *I believe* in that place, making the article run, as it does at this day, 'I believe in the Holy Ghost, &c.' This observable circumstance relating to that Creed is a confirmation of the opinion that the *first* Creeds (in some places at least) were of such a kind as Episcopus mentions.

The words of Episcopus, here referred to, are these—

The most ancient form, and that which was used in the first administration of baptism from the very time of the Apostles, was this—'I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,'—according to the formula prescribed by Jesus himself.

And so says Bishop Watson—

I am disposed to accede to your remark that whatever doctrine is not contained in the form prescribed by Christ, for receiving disciples by baptism into the Church, cannot be necessary to be believed by Christians.

But even this assumes it as certain that the words ascribed to Christ, at the end of the Gospel of St. Mathew, were really uttered by him, and are not rather a traditionary saying, originating with the later practice of the Church, and inserted by the unknown compiler, to whom (according to Dean Alford and other eminent critics) we owe the first Gospel in its present form. At all events, as I have said before, we find no trace of any such a formula used in baptism in the various instances recorded in the Acts, where we read repeatedly of persons being baptised 'in the name of Jesus Christ,' 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' 'in the name of the Lord,' but never 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,'—which is inconceivable if these words had been expressly laid down by Christ himself, as the form to be always used in baptism.

You now know what is the real account of the origin of what is commonly called—but most incorrectly—the Apos-

bles' Creed. And you see that, in repeating it, we are merely repeating the form of words, which the Roman Church required to be learned and repeated by its candidates for baptism, perhaps as early as the end of the fourth century, since we find it in the writings of Ambrose of that age—but we repeat it also with some additions which were made to it at a still later time, as late as the sixth or even the eighth century.

(ii) Let us now consider the question of the Nicene Creed. It is well-known, of course, that this Creed was composed at the Council of Nicæa, in the year 325, when more than 300 Bishops were present gathered from various parts of Christendom, and 318 signed this Confession of Faith. The Emperor Constantine himself, who summoned the Council and paid the expenses of it, presided at their discussions; and, singularly enough,—though a layman and even unbaptized till just before his death,—we are told that he took a very active part in these conferences, and helped not a little to settle the terms of the Creed. This is the account which Soerates, the Ecclesiastical Historian, gives of these proceedings.

When a silence suitable to the occasion had been observed, the Emperor from his seat began to address them, entreating each to lay aside all private pique, and exhorting them to unanimity and concord. For several of them had brought accusations against one another, and many had even presented petitions to the Emperor the day before. But he, directing their attention to the matter before them, and on account of which they were assembled, ordered these petitions to be burnt, merely observing that Christ enjoins him, who is anxious to obtain forgiveness, to forgive his brother.

You see, *men* were much the same then as they are now, and have been in all ages, and even the ministers of religion were only too ready to accuse and judge, anathematise and excommunicate, each other. It needed the strong arm of the Emperor to keep them in order, in 'harmony and peace'; and it needed also, it seems, his strong head to bring their debates to the end which he desired, of an almost unanimous agreement; for five bishops only dissented from the Creed agreed to by the majority. It must not be supposed, however, that this represents the real proportion of the dissentients. For these 323 bishops were gathered from the East and West; whereas, about thirty years afterwards, 400 were gathered, at the Council of Rimini, from the West alone, and of these as many as 80 held the same views as the five who dissented from the decisions of the Nicene Council. And so, at the second General Council

held at Constantinople in the year 381, there were 150 on the 'orthodox' side, and 36 on the other.

The part of Constantine in these discussions is described by Eusebius as follows :—

A variety of topics having been introduced by each party, and much controversy being excited from the very commencement, the Emperor listened to all with patient attention, deliberately and impartially considering whatever was advanced. He in part supported the statements which were made on both sides, and gradually softened the asperity of those who contentiously opposed each other, conciliating each by his mildness and affability. Addressing them in the Greek language, with which he was well acquainted, in a manner at once interesting and persuasive, he *wrought conviction on the minds of some, and prevailed on others by entreaty*. Those who spoke well he applauded, and incited all to unanimity; until at length he succeeded in bringing them into similarity of judgment and conformity of opinion on all the controverted points.

Without subscribing to the censorious judgment of a certain heretical bishop Sabinus, who, says Socrates, "calls all those that were convened there idiots and simpletons," and "brands the faith, which was declared at Nicæa, as having been set forth by idiots, and such as had no intelligence in the matter," we may at least see from this account what means were used to produce the much-desired unanimity, and we may estimate the degree of weight to be attached to the opinions of men, who, though bishops, were not agreed beforehand on such important subjects, but were brought to agreement by the Emperor's potent personal influence, either 'convinced' by his arguments, or 'prevailed on by his entreaties.'

By Constantine's authority the Nicene Confession was now published as '*the faith*' of the whole Empire: for, said he,—

that which has commended itself to the judgment of 300 bishops cannot be other than the doctrine of God; seeing that the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the minds of so many dignified persons, has effectually enlightened them respecting the Divine Will.

Arius, of course, against whose views the Creed was especially directed, was anathematised by the Council and banished by the Emperor, who supported moreover the "orthodox" cause by issuing the following decisive edict for the destruction of all his writings :—

If any treatise composed by Arius should be discovered, let it be consigned to the flames, in order that not only his depraved doctrine may be suppressed, but also that no memorial of him may be by any means left. This, therefore, I decree, that, if any one shall be detected in concealing a book compiled by Arius, and shall not instantly bring it forward and burn it, the penalty for this offence shall be *death*; for immediately after conviction the criminal shall suffer capital punishment.

After this fashion was the Nicene Creed established, and by an Emperor, who was not even baptized till twelve years afterwards, so little was his *heart* really concerned in all the zeal which he manifested on behalf of the "orthodox" faith, and so little indeed was the heart needed for discussing the great question, which gave so much employment to the intellect in those days, and gave rise to such terrible long-continued strife, to such accursed passions, to such dire acts of violence and blood, on both sides, between the Athanasian and the Arian, who disputed literally about a single letter, a single iota, whether the Son should be called *homoiousios*, that is, of the *like* substance with the Father, or *homoousios*, of the *same* substance, as we find it in the Nicene Creed. In the year 324, the very year before the Council, Constantine had put to death, we are told, on a charge of high treason, his accomplished son, Crispus,—

whose virtues and glory would perhaps have been the joy of a father, but for their rendering him popular with the nation, and producing ambition in the mind of Crispus himself.

His sister's son was accused of the same crime, and suffered the same fate; and many others perished upon the charge of being connected with the same conspiracy. In fact the great historian Niebuhr has given this account—it would seem, a very just one—of Constantine's belief.

Many judge of him by too severe a standard, because they look upon him as a Christian; but I cannot regard him in that light. The religion, which he had in his head, must have been a strange compound indeed. The man, who had on his coins the inscription, *Sol invictus*, 'the unconquered Sun,' who worshipped pagan divinities, consulted the soothsayers, indulged in a number of pagan superstitions, and, on the other hand, built churches, shut up pagan temples, and interfered with the Council of Nicæa, must have been a repulsive phenomenon, and was certainly not a Christian. He did not allow himself to be baptized till the last moments of his life; and those, who praise him for this, do not know what they are doing. He was a superstitious man, and mixed up his Christian Religion with all kinds of absurd superstitions and opinions. When, therefore, certain Oriental writers call him a quasi-apostle, they do not know what they are saying, and to speak of him as a saint is a profanation of the word.

It is no wonder that, of his two sons, the elder, Constantius, favoured the Arian views, and the other, Constans, the Athanasian,—in other words, the one adopted, and the other rejected, the Nicene Creed. Nor was this Creed received universally at a much later age. In the Council of Autun, in France, held in the latter half of the *seventh* century, it was ordered as follows:—

If any Presbyter, Deacon, Subdeacon, or Clerk, doth not unreprovably recite the Creed which the Apostles delivered by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and also the Faith of the holy Prelate Athanasius, let them be censured by the Bishop.

Here, then, stress is laid upon the Apostles'—that is, the Roman—Creed, and the Athanasian: but nothing is said about the Nicene. And so Dr. Waterland says, iii.p.119:—

It does not appear that the Nicene Creed was so much taken notice of at that time in the Gallican Churches, while the Apostolical or Roman Creed, made use of in baptism, in the Western churches, instead of the Nicene, which prevailed in the East, in a manner superseded it. . . . Besides which, it appears from Hinemar, Archbishop of Rheims, that is was no strange thing even so low as his time, about 850, to recommend the Athanasian Creed along with the Apostles', without a word of the Nicene. And . . . it is certain that the Nicene was not yet received into the Sacred Offices in France, nor till many years after, about the time of Pepin, or of Charles the Great.

And elsewhere he writes of the Athanasian Creed, iii.p.197:—

As to the *antiquity* of its reception into the sacred offices, *this* Creed has been received in several countries, France, Germany, England, Italy, and even Rome itself, as soon, or sooner than, the Nicene.

Yet even the Nicene Creed, as we now read it, is not the Creed in its original form: like the Apostles', as the same writer tells us, the Nicene also 'has been growing up to its present perfection in a course of years or centuries of years.' Thus, it stands in the Creed "*begotten before all worlds*": but these words "*before all worlds*" were not inserted by the Nicene Council, but by the Constantinopolitan, about fifty years afterwards. And Dr. Waterland adds, iii.p.21:—

There can be no doubt but that the Constantinopolitan Council intended *eternal* generation: but, as to the Nicene Council, it may be questioned whether they did or no.

But besides various other important insertions such as the phrases—

'by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary,' 'was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate,' 'sitteth on the right hand of the Father,' 'whose kingdom shall have no end,'—

none of which are found in the real Nicene Creed,—the whole of the last paragraph, as it exists in our Prayer Books, was added to the original form, except the first clause: that is to say, the Creed, as agreed to by the Council of Nicæa, ended with these words—'And we believe in the Holy Ghost'; but the remaining sentences—'the Lord and Giver-of-Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, &c.'—are all extraneous additions. And to this day the whole Eastern Church rejects the phrase '*and the Son*,' maintaining that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father alone, and so coming under the terrible censure of the Athanasian Creed, which Creed indeed it rejects altogether.

(iii) Let me now give you some account of this Creed, the Athanasian, which has really no more to do with Athanasius than the Apostles' Creed has to do with the Apostles. On this point I will merely quote the remarks of Dr. Waterland, who has specially devoted himself to this enquiry.

Though I do not pretend to strict certainty about the *author* of the Creed, yet I persuade myself that none that have been hitherto named have any fairer, or so fair a claim to it as the man I have mentioned . . . The sum, then, of what I have presumed to advance upon probable conjecture, in a case which will not admit of full and perfect evidence, is this: that Hilary, once Abbot of Lerins, and next Bishop of Arles, about the year 430, [about 60 years after the death of Athanasius,] composed the exposition of Faith, which now bears the name of the Athanasian Creed. It was drawn up for the use of the Gallican Clergy, and especially for the diocese or province of Arles. . . . About the year 570 it became famous enough to be commented upon like the Lord's Prayer, and Apostles' Creed, and together with them. All this while, and perhaps for several years lower, it had not yet acquired the name of the *Athanasian Faith*, but was simply styled the *Catholic Faith*. But before 670 Athanasius's admired name came in to recommend and adorn it, being in itself also an excellent system of the Athanasian principles of the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*. . . . The name of the 'Faith of Athanasius,' in a while, occasioned the mistake of ascribing it to him, as his composition. This gave it authority enough to be cited and appealed to as a standard, in the disputes of the Middle Ages, between Greeks and Latins, about the *procession* [of the Spirit from the Father and the Son.] And the same admired name, together with the intrinsic worth and value of the form itself, gave it credit enough to be received into the public Service in the *Western Churches*,—first, in France, next in Spain, soon after in Germany, England, Italy, and in Rome itself. iii.219.

This Creed is not received in *all* the Greek Churches, and, if it is in *any*, yet it is there differently read in the article of the *procession*. It is not pretended that any of the *African Churches* . . . have received it: so far from it, that they have not—at least the Ethiopian Churches have not—so much as the Apostles' Creed among them. . . . Nor is it pretended that the more Eastern Christians, belonging to the Patriarchates of Antioch or Jerusalem, have any acquaintance with the Athanasian Creed.

You now know that, when you repeat the Athanasian Creed, you are not reciting the words of Athanasius, or of any great General Council, but those, most probably, of a French monk, Hilary, afterwards Bishop, which were first introduced into England, it appears, about the year 800.

Such, then, are the three Creeds, which our Church retains, and which are repeated from time to time in our services, as summaries of what their writers considered to be truths most essential to be believed, or rather to be maintained in opposition to those who began to question them. That these Creeds 'may be proved,' as our 8th Article says, 'by most certain warrant of Scripture,'—in other words, that their statements are derived from Scripture statements and are agreeable thereto,—there is no room to doubt. And they "ought, therefore, thoroughly to be received and believed,"

in the same sense as we are bound to "believe unfeignedly" the Scriptures themselves, on which they are based, as "containing everything necessary to salvation."

But, when we turn from these Creeds to the simplicity of the Gospel itself,—when we see how for many minds the Athanasian Creed, for instance, puts thorns and briars to narrow up, as it were, the entrance into life, in a way in which our Lord has not narrowed it,—making intellectual conceptions, or assents to certain statements, the ground of acceptance with God, instead of a pure and loving heart, a truth-speaking tongue, and an upright life—it is blessed, and soothing to the heart and brain, to fall back upon such words as these of the text,—

"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is True, and we are in Him that is True, even in His Son, Jesus Christ."

We *know* by the light which cheers our eyes, by the life which stirs our hearts, that the God whom Christ has revealed to the sons of men, as their Father and Friend, is indeed the True God. Not by abstruse formulæ, but by the simple utterances of these two words, "Father, Brother," has he given us an understanding that we may know Him that is True, for all the practical work of life,—may know our relation to Him, and to each other. And in fellowship with Christ, as brethren of God's Great Family, we have fellowship with God—we are "in Him that is True." Through that revelation of God's Love and Truth and Holiness, which is made in the life and death of Christ, and by his Divine Teaching, we have known—we have seen—the Father, and it sufficeth us.

"This is the True God, and Eternal Life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

THE ATHANASIAN CREED.

At the Bishopsgate Vestry, on Oct. 9, 1866, the following resolution was carried:—"That this vestry requests the churchwardens, in making their presentment to the Bishop of London, at the forthcoming visitation, to convey to his lordship the expression of their feelings that the use of the Creed, called by the name of Athanasius, is an offence to a considerable number of the members of the Church of England, and tends to keep from the pale of her communion many who would gladly unite on her otherwise catholic basis."

Upon this subject the *Spectator* has the following article:—"Some of our ecclesiastical contemporaries are sneering at a vestry for taking up the subject of the Athanasian Creed, and requesting the Bishop to take any steps in his power to obtain a discontinuance of the use of it in the Liturgy of the Church. Of course the sneer proceeds on the ground, as shown in a letter in another

column from the vestryman of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, who brought forward the resolution, that vestrymen are not theologians. If, however, they are supposed to be theologians enough to say the Creed, and to be saved by it, we suppose they must be theologians enough to refuse to say it and be damned by it; and clearly, what a man refuses to say at the peril, as many persons believe, of his own soul, he is refusing to say on grounds which deserve the fullest consideration of the ecclesiastical authorities of the Church. . . . As to the main question at issue, we need not conceal for a moment that we are heartily at one with the vestryman of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate. We hold the so-called Athanasian Creed, though perhaps capable, like most other things in the world, of a subtle metaphysical defence that might *explain away* its most objectionable features, to be, in its broad and general drift, bad theology, bad morals, and bad sense. Now, as Creeds to be repeated in churches are not meant for refined theologians, who can thread their way subtly between the Scylla of one false popular interpretation and the Charybdis of another, but for ordinary persons, greengrocers and parish paupers included, who are quite sure to take the sense (or nonsense) that seems most near to the plain meaning of the words, it is obviously a very great mischief that a Creed should be especially appointed for those days in the year when Christians most earnestly wish to unite on the common ground of their faith, which seems to some a mass of contradiction, to most men an incarnation of uncharitable passion, and to a few the express repudiation of St. John's (which is also the Nicene) theology. It is not easy to exhaust the objections to this Creed, which, if it bears Athanasius's name at all, might better be called the anti-Athanasian Creed than the Athanasian, so open are certain of its dogmatic assertions to an interpretation which Athanasius would have earnestly repudiated. But its vices may perhaps be reduced to four, which seem to us to have the greatest possible weight. First, *in form*, the Creed is not a Creed, but a string of precise dogmas. . . . It is much, very much, to make the believer feel that he is not using his intellect *mainly*, but his spiritual faculty of trust *mainly*, and his intellect only in subordination to it. The Apostles' and Nicene Creed do this. Both no doubt involve intellectual judgments, and the latter even metaphysical convictions, but in both cases the great Objects of faith tower high above the definition of our human thoughts concerning them. The first thing that strikes the spirit is the Divine Person in whom belief is expressed,—only the second thing, and this quite subordinately, the intellectual definition of our own mode of thought about Him. . . . On the strong ground, then, of Creed *versus* Dogma, we hold that the Athanasian, which is purely a logical exercise, has no place whatever in social worship. The very form of it excludes it from a true liturgy. It is not an act of trust, but a controversial statement; not a spiritual profession, but a feat of intellectual hair-splitting,—in short, a composition expressly adapted by its *form*, not to speak yet of its substance, not to unite, but to divide. Next, the substance of this Creed is—at all events to the kind of persons expected to join in it, and as we believe to everybody—disfigured by self-contradiction and bad sense. For example, 'The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal, and yet they are not three eternal but one eternal.' What the Creed means, we suppose, is that there are three eternal *persons*, and one eternal being in whom all these three eternal persons are united; but it seeks out needlessly and scandalously the language of contradiction, and gives the impression that, *in the same sense* in which they are three, in that same sense also they are one. We call this a scandal, because it forces the sense of self-contradiction needlessly on the ordinary mind with reference to sacred subjects, on which mere logic-chopping is scandalous. Or here, again:—'The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. . . . For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person *by himself* to be God and Lord, so are we forbidden by the Catholic faith to say there be three Gods and three Lords.' . . . If each person '*by himself*' is 'God and Lord,' then, as there are three persons by themselves, there are in the very same sense, in which all these words have

been hitherto used, three Gods and three Lords. . . . A more explicit assertion of a proposition in one sentence which is denied in the next in the very same sense in which it was previously asserted, it is impossible to find in any human composition. Next, this spurious Creed is, as we have said, bad theology. Nothing can be clearer than that the Nicene Creed and the Gospel of St. John deny the equality of the Father and Son in every sense in which the word 'equality' has any meaning. 'I can do nothing of myself,' 'I have not spoken of myself,'—phrases repeated a score of times in the Gospel,—are not words asserting equality. He who can do nothing, who has no life, except in obedience and filial love, is not, in the common meaning of the terms, the *equal* of Him whose eternal life he shares. Our Lord indeed speaks of all men '*honouring* the Son even as they honour the Father;' but equal honour does not imply equality in the object of that honour. . . . Indeed our Lord says expressly, 'the Father is greater than I,' *not* 'greater than my human nature,' but 'greater than I'; and 'greater than I' can scarcely mean the same as 'equal to me.' . . . But last and worst of all, the Athanasian Creed is bad in its morality. We know that charitable clergymen have pleaded that it *cannot* mean that men are to 'perish everlastingly' for an intellectual error, because it would be so very un-Christian to think so. But that is, at all events to all ordinary human understandings, precisely what it says, and continually reiterates. 'Whoever will be saved, *before all things* it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith;—'before all things,' mind,—for instance, before '*doing* the will of my Father which is in heaven,' which our Lord makes the antecedent condition of 'knowing of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.' 'Which faith,' it goes on, as if nervously afraid of underrating the magnitude of the stake at issue, 'except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.' Again, after the definition of the Trinity, 'He therefore that will be saved must thus *think* of the Trinity.' Do Unitarians, for instance, 'thus *think* of the Trinity?' Do Sabellians, do Arians, does the Greek Church, do Swedenborgians? And are not, therefore, all these excluded expressly from hope of salvation? Again, 'Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ;' and then follow definitions, the rejection of which shuts out most of the old classes of heretics and several new ones from hope of salvation. And finally, at the close we read, 'This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved.' Now, whatever modes of escape wise and thoughtful and subtle men have invented from this mesh of intolerance, we assert that what it teaches, and must ever teach to the popular mind, is a gospel of damnation, and not a gospel of salvation. It damns freely for all sorts of metaphysical inabilities,—nay, as we believe, for sound sense, divine theology, and the spirit of love. . . . That our own national Church has retained this metaphysical mockery of Christian worship up to the present time is at once a proof how silently the consciences of men ignore the poison which is offered to them, and how inert is their intellect in ridding itself of what no longer represents the convictions even of one out of every hundred of English Churchmen.

